

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
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O R 290834Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0000
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL KARACHI
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL LAHORE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ISLAMABAD 7726

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: LEADERS SET FREE: ELECTION RULES ANNOUNCED

1. ACCORDING TO A PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE MARTIAL LAW
AUTHORITIES (MLA), ALL PNA AND PPP LEADERS WERE RELEASED FROM
PROTECTIVE CUSTODY THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 28. MOST OF THEM, IN-
CLUDING BHUTTO AND ASGHAR KHAN, SPENT THE NIGHT IN ISLAMABAD,
PLANNED TO GO TO THEIR HOMES THE NEXT DAY. GENERAL ZIA MET WITH
THE LEADERS BEFORE THEY WERE FREED AND APPRISED THEM OF THE
RULES GOVERNING POLITICAL CONDUCT BEGINNING AUGUST 1, WHICH
THEY REPORTEDLY AGREED TO ABIDE BY. NEWSSTORIES INDICATE THAT
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BOTH PARTIES, ACTING QUICKLY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR NEWFOUND
FREEDOM, WILL HOLD CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS WITHIN THE
NEXT TEN DAYS TO PLOT OUT THEIR ELECTION STRATEGY.

2. STATING THAT THE POLLING DATE WOULD BE MADE PUBLIC IN A WEEK,
CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER JUSTICE MUSHTAQ HUSSAIN ANNOUNCED
REVISED ELECTION RULES IN A TELEVISED PRESS CONFERENCE ON

JULY 28. UNDER THE NEW PROCEDURES, POLLING FOR THE NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES WILL BE HELD ON THE SAME DAY. ADDITIONAL KEY POINTS INCLUDE:

- ELECTION OFFICERS WILL BE DRAWN FROM THE ARMY AND JUDICIARY AS FAR AS POSSIBLE
- THE ARMY WILL HAVE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER AT THE POLLING STATIONS
- ELECTORAL ROLLS WILL NOT BE REVISED ALTHOUGH NAMES OF LEGITIMATE VOTERS CAN BE ADDED
- NUMBER OF POLLING BOOTHS WILL BE INCREASED
- SPECIAL BALLOT PAPERS WILL BE PRINTED AND DISTRIBUTED UNDER MILITARY GUARD
- NOMINATING PROCESS WILL BE FULLY SAFEGUARDED; ONCE NOMINATED, CANDIDATES WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RETIRE FROM THE ELECTIONS.
- ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED BY THE ELECTION COMMISSION.
- ELECTION COMMISSION WILL HAVE FULL POWERS TO ORDER RE POLLING AND AWARD PUNISHMENT FOR MALPRACTICES.

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A PRESIDENTIAL ORDER, SETTING OUT THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ELECTIONS, WAS ISSUED THE SAME DAY.

3. THE CEC APPEALED TO THE CANDIDATES AS WELL AS THE VOTERS TO REMAIN CALM AND RESPECT THE LAW. HE REGRETTED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, PART OF THE ISLAMIC VISION OF THE STATE, HAD BEEN PERSISTENTLY SABOTAGED IN THE PAST. LEGAL ACTION, HE SAID, WILL SHORTLY BE TAKEN AGAINST A FORMER MINISTER, VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLIES, AND SOME POLLING OFFICERS FOR MALPRACTICE COMMITTED IN THE MARCH ELECTIONS. IN A PERCEPTIVE REMARK, SUCCINCTLY SUMMARIZING THE PAST SIX MONTHS, HE ADDED THAT "NORMALLY IT IS THE ALMIGHTY WHO TESTS THE PROPLE, BUT IN THIS COUNTRY IT SEEMS THAT THE PEOPLE ARE BENT ON TESTING THEIR CREATOR."

4. COMMENT: THE CEC APPEARS TO HAVE DONE ALL THAT ONE POSSIBLY COULD DO UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES TO INSURE THAT FREE AND FAIR POLLS ARE HELD IN OCTOBER. THE POLITICAL PARTIES, WHICH THE CEC SAID WERE NOT CONSULTED ABOUT THE NEW RULES, HAVE NOT YET COMMENTED ON THEM. HOWEVER, THEY WOULD APPEAR TO MEET MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THE PNA'S CONCERNS WITH ONE MAJOR EXCEPTION - THE GRANTING OF A JOINT ELECTION SYMBOL. WHEN QUESTIONED BY

REPORTERS ABOUT THIS CRUCIAL POINT, THE CEC REPLIED THAT HE HAD NOT YET CONSIDERED THE MATTER. ULTIMATELY, THE OUTCOME OF THE CAMPAIGN AND WLECTIONS WILL DEPEND ON THE INTENTIONS AND PRACTICES OF THE PARTIES INVOLVED. WITH BHUTTO AND THE OTHER LEADERS NOW OUT OF JAIL, THESE WILL SOON BE TESTED.
HUMMEL

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